

## Starting with the Spirit

### Notes on the Bible readings

- Pentecost was originally a Jewish harvest festival, celebrated 50 days after Passover, and came to commemorate Moses receiving the Law from God. As Pentecost approaches, the disciples are feeling very uncertain, suspended between Jesus' death and the coming of the Holy Spirit. Jesus has promised to send an 'advocate' or 'helper' (John 14.26) and the disciples are nervously waiting. They lack confidence because they have lost their leader. Their senses are intensified and their expectations are high, but they don't know what to do. It is not a rational earthly experience that resolves their wait, but a heavenly one.

- Wind and fire are often used in the Old Testament as symbols of God's presence; they are like God's 'signature'. The Jewish scholar Philo (c.25 BC – AD 50) talks about God speaking in the fire at Mount Sinai, and Luke draws on this tradition in describing the disciples' vision as tongues of fire. Their experience of God is a powerful and transformative one.

- In the upper room, the breath of God starts something new. Often used as a sign of life, it breathes new life into the disciples and inspires them with confidence. They are transformed into linguists and bold preachers who are not afraid to share their faith. And as Jesus promised (John 14.27), they have a new sense of peace. How do we experience God? What does the Holy Spirit inspire us to do?

### Questions for reflection

- ▶ What do you think this person is experiencing?
- ▶ When have you 'abandoned' yourself totally to God?
- ▶ What were/are the practical consequences of doing so?



### A prayer of praise

*We praise you, God of all language and all culture, that in the coming of your Holy Spirit, Jesus' promise to be with us always is fulfilled, and we are equipped and enabled to serve you in the strength and with the energy you delight to bless us with. May every day be as Pentecost – an opportunity to hear you speaking to our hearts, a commissioning to share your gospel, and a chance to celebrate your presence among us. Amen.*

### A prayer for forgiveness

*Forgive us, God of the universe, when as individuals, as a church or as a nation, we limit your love and hinder the healing work of your Spirit. May we not be restrained or restricted in our faith, but be agents of reconciliation, praying that your saving grace goes out into every corner of the world, to your glory. Amen.*

### A personal prayer

*Gracious God, equip me with Power, Energy, Newness, Trust, Eagerness, Confidence, Opportunity, Strength, and Truth – that I may serve you in your world today. Amen.*

For reflection and comment linking this week's Bible reading to the news, current issues and events, go to [www.rootsontheweb.com](http://www.rootsontheweb.com) and click on PostScript.



### Live your faith

Prepare a simple one-sentence response to give when people ask you, 'What did you do at the weekend?' – e.g. 'celebrated the birth of the Church', 'received peace', 'prayed', or simply, 'I was in church'. Think each day what it means to be a witness for Jesus.